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MISPLACED PATRONAGE

It is a well known fact that a virtue carried to excess becomes an evil—that the “straight and narrow path” is to be found in the midst of the “broad road” and a misstep on either side is thus disastrous. For years those most interested in the development of American art have been urging loyal recognition of its merits and opposing the conviction that works of art like frocks and bonnets were finer and better for having been made abroad. The vogue for things foreign has been so persistent and great that not a few of our American artists have in the past found the surest way to recognition at home was by way of Europe.

This state of things is as yet scarcely undergone, when, behold, on many sides is to be seen the upspringing of a tendency quite opposite which in its way is no less detrimental. This is a tendency toward exclusive home patronage. It is not a national spirit but a local sentiment and one which is bound to retard development if put into universal practice.

For instance a monument is to be erected in the principal city of a certain state—a competition is to be held—state pride asserts itself and it is agreed that none save those native to or resident in the state shall be eligible to compete. In another state a new capitol has been erected—this has been designed through requirement by a native architect and may only be decorated by native mural painters. The custom once

established will quickly become prevalent with the result that eventually no artist can expect to receive a commission outside of the state in which he lives, and there will be no such a thing as national renown. Obviously, through such a system, a premium would be placed on mediocrity, as competition would be limited and hence instead of developing art its development would be retarded.

This is an exaggerated kind of loyalty similar to the old tariff on art which insisted upon protecting those who declared they needed no protection. The only real victory is that which is won in open competition. It is no glory to secure a prize for which there are almost no other competitors. Neither do we want public art procured through charitable patronage. The public deserves the best that can be had. Real appreciation is not that which condones errors but rather that which recognizes and rewards merit. Patronage indeed is a dangerous gift when bestowed without wise discrimination.

ART IN THE SCHOOL

Pictures and casts are placed in school-rooms as decorations, to teach children appreciation of beauty and to afford instruction. The subject interest makes the first and strongest appeal, but it should always be presented in adequate form. The first question should always be: “Is this good art?” It must always be kept in mind that the child will have to live, day after day, with the pictures selected. Art is not something remote from daily experience, something kept for special occasions, like Sunday clothes. A liking for beauty should become a matter of course and of daily habit. “Art for life’s sake,” therefore.

Selection must always be based on the formula “I know why I like,” not “what I like.” Hanging and placing depend on distribution of wall space and of wall fixtures, such as blackboard, ventilator, clock. The general decoration of the room is to be considered, and of other rooms in the school, and the school-grounds have their place in the scheme. So the influence of the picture spreads.

That influence depends much on the

teacher. Not what is seen counts, but what is sympathetically understood. Tactful guidance may do much to bring art close to the child. In Public School 120, in New York City, for instance, the pictures are explained from the esthetic, historical, and ethical viewpoints. The value of art as a record of contemporary life must be emphasized.

If the pictures come to mean something in the life of the children, they should carry some of that influence to their homes. Proper decoration is inconceivable but in clean surroundings. May not the preference for beauty and cleanliness extend also to morals, society, civics? May not the appreciation of beauty help to promote beautiful actions? So, with cleaner rooms and cleaner habits, why not cleaner streets, cleaner politics, cleaner lives?

F. W.

NOTES

THE CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOL ART SOCIETY

The Chicago Public School Art Society has been most successful in obtaining and placing works of art in the public schools. Among other loans a group of eight pictures by Chicago artists was placed last winter in the hands of the Society and sent to the Jones School for two months, followed by a second group representing Chicago artists. Several other schools also had the benefit of these same pictures. The general Loan Collection during the past year has been at the Patrick Henry School; the Jochannah Lodge Collection has been at the Washburne and Clark schools; the Artists' Loan of Originals at the Carl Schurz High School, and the Lillian Buckingham Loan Collection at the Hayes School.

In making request for this collection for the Hayes School the principal wrote of the great need in that manufacturing district of "something pleasant to look upon, something to suggest pleasant thoughts and emotions." Later the following incident was reported:

"As soon as the expressman had left the pictures on the floor of the first primary room, a tiny lad on the back seat raised his grimy hand to ask permission to go nearer

to them. The foremost happened to be that of a Dutch mother looking out over the sea while her baby lay upon the sand. Without a moment's hesitation the little fellow dropped on his knees before this picture and impulsively kissed the baby."

Some months later when writing to ask that if possible the time for the collection to remain in that school might be extended (a not infrequent request) the principal wrote: "This school is in a very poor neighborhood and we are making strenuous efforts for a general uplift. The pictures have been a blessing—almost a Godsend, as there is scarcely a good picture in the neighborhood and only a very few in the schoolrooms."

The Society carefully determines the types of pictures that are proving of greatest value, and both principals and teachers give convincing testimony as to the effect on the children.

ART IN PROVIDENCE

The Providence Art Club's annual costume party took the form this year of "An Arabian Night." Local artists, headed by Wm. E. Brigham, Sydney R. Burleigh and H. Anthony Dyer, provided a setting for the affair which surpassed in beauty and in scope anything previously seen. Private collections and the dealers' shops all contributed liberally, and the Oriental rugs, hanging lamps, draperies, pottery and other articles of quaint design thus assembled were used to transform the large gallery, while the library adjoining served for a stage and was provided with a setting of painted Egyptian tiles and designs in lovely tones of blue and green. A note of color was added here and there in dull rose and the entrance cleverly disguised as a Moorish arch in mosaic work done in red, yellow and gold. The members in their rich costumes completed a picture of unusual brilliancy and the stunts of the entertainers added a comedy element.

An exhibition of much interest and remarkable variety was held in the Art Club Gallery from March 14th to 26th. The group of artists included F. Usher DeVoll, Angela O'Leary, Hope Smith and Wm. H. Drury. Mr. Drury was well represented by marine paintings, the result of a recent trip to Bermuda and of study covering several years. Miss Smith had several